Less reliance on pesticides

We support least-toxic pest management on the farm, and in schools and neighborhoods.

Celebrating 11 years of Innovators

Since 1994, DPR has given out more than 80 IPM Innovator Awards to honor private and public organizations that emphasize pest prevention, favor least-hazardous pest control, and share their successful strategies with others. (IPM – integrated pest management – works with nature to encourage beneficial plants and animals while making it difficult for pests to survive.)

For many recipients the award comes as a long-overdue acknowledgement of work conducted with little financial reward and against many technical and logistical obstacles. It serves as notice that it pays to do the right thing, for the right reasons. As Ganna Walska Lotusland Foundation, a Santa Barbara botanical garden that won a 2001 award, said, "DPR's recognition of our determination to pursue new systems of pest control and our efforts to share our experience with others is truly gratifying."

The Sonoma County Grape Growers Association, recipient of a 2000 IPM Innovator award, appreciated how the award validated what the group had accomplished in providing growers with information and educational opportunities to promote sustainable grape production. The association added that "grower support had been tremendous." In turn, Bob Hopkins, a Russian River Valley grape grower, praised the association's work, saying that "one real accomplishment was getting growers together talking about pesticide reduction...letting people know it is doable and desirable."

At the 2004 awards ceremony, representatives of IPM Innovator Fetzer Vineyards of Mendocino County summed up the company's philosophy: "We don't do it because it's trendy or to make a political statement. We do it because we believe that it results in better-tasting wines and that it's simply the right thing to do."

Building on Alliances and Grants

Since 1995, DPR's Pest Management Grants and Alliances have helped build grassroots support of IPM, encouraging an array of experimentation and demonstration projects with one goal: identify workable, least-hazardous pest management solutions.

We have good news and bad. From 1995 to 2002, DPR awarded about $8 million for 154 grants and 44 alliances in 38 counties, with emphasis on protecting surface and ground water, finding alternatives to high-toxicity pesticides, and reducing worker exposure. In agriculture, DPR-funded projects have demonstrated IPM practices in almonds, wine grapes, walnuts, prunes, peaches, plums, citrus, and other commodities – crops that are now planted on hundreds of thousands of acres in Cali-

fornia. In the urban environment, DPR projects have helped schools, museums, and communities demonstrate model IPM programs. On the downside, the State budget crisis forced a suspension of Grant and Alliance funding in 2002. However, we will be looking at creative solutions to build on these successes in light of budget realities.

There are many success stories. A notable one – because it led directly to greater IPM adoption on a commodity-wide basis – is the Almond Pest Management Alliance, formed in 1998 with pesticide use reduction as a priority. The consortium of growers, researchers, and pest control advisors received funds from DPR for five years. The money established an industry program that continues to find pest management solutions that reduce use of problematic pesticides. Almond growers used 14.5 million pounds of pesticide in 1997 – the year before the Alliance – but 10.1 million pounds in 2002. The decline coincided with a rise in planted acres and production.

Almond growers point to diazinon as an example of the effort. Their use of the insecticide fell from 115,000 pounds in 1997 to 63,000 pounds in 2001, a 45 percent drop. Diazinon is often sprayed in the dormant season, where winter rain can cause runoff into rivers, lakes, and streams. Growers now use orchard sanitation to remove certain over-wintering pests, applications of dormant oil alone with no insecticide, or in-season applications of reduced-risk insecticides. Pheromone monitoring traps are used to track pest and beneficial insect levels. This monitoring information is used for making in-season pest management decisions. Growers also plant cover crops to attract beneficial insects and improve water infiltration in the orchard.

In 2003, U.S. EPA awarded a $40,000 grant to DPR to continue its assistance to the almond growers. One especially noteworthy product was the *Seasonal Guide to Environmentally Responsible Pest Management Practices in Almonds*. Published in October 2004, it is a colorful, easy-to-follow "cookbook" guide to a reduced-risk system of almond production.

Encouraging school IPM

Working with school districts to make IPM the preferred way to manage pests is paying off. More school district personnel are being trained in IPM and schools are finding that the least-toxic approach works well.

They are being helped by the revised School IPM Guidebook DPR published in 2003. In 2004, we developed and distributed pest-specific school IPM fact sheets on ants and cockroaches. (In development are handouts on yellowjackets, gophers and weeds.)

All our published school IPM information – and there is a lot if it – is posted on our dedicated Web site (www.schoolipm.info). For example, we feature new curricula on yellowjackets, burrowing rodents, landscape weeds and turf weeds we developed for the IPM training sessions we hold regularly for district staff.

In 2003 and 2004, DPR staff conducted nine regional training workshops, attended by 288 staff from 226 school districts. (There are 998 districts in California, about a third of which have requested training.) We plan to conduct four more workshops in 2005.

We will also be working with UC's Statewide IPM Program on an interactive training module for school IPM. It will supplement the workshops by providing school IPM coordinators with an additional tool to use for their localized district training efforts.

In late 2004, our school IPM program started quarterly updates to district IPM coordinators, and a biannual newsletter starts in spring of 2005. In summer of 2005, we will publish our survey of school IPM practices, comparing the results to two previous surveys.